

Grace Presbyterian Church, Orleans, ON
“Remembering and Looking Forward...”
Luke 20: 27 - 38
Pastor Jonathan

November 10, 2019
Remembrance Sunday

I'll tell you a story while the texts are passed out for those who need them or want them.

I'll entitle the story: “Life is full of surprises.” A young man named Bill was in his last year of high school when the Second World War broke out. He didn't know it was going to be called that. He just knew he had to serve. He had straight “A”s in his high school academics. He was looking forward to becoming an engineer. But instead, he now lied about his age, because he was a year too young to sign up, and signed up with the Merchant Marine. I had asked him, “Why the merchant marine, out of all the branches of the military services?” He would always smile, and say “They paid the best.” I asked, “Why?” And he said it was because if you were serving on a tanker with high octane aviation fuel, or simply oil, it would only take one torpedo for a large explosion and a complete loss of all aboard. So they had to pay you in line with that danger. Later his brother told me he really wanted to be with the Air Force but his eyes weren't good enough.

So he served four years aboard many ships, sailed the seven seas, as they say and survived the war, as his father had survived the trenches of World War 1, and his maternal grandfather had survived the Boer War. He went on to marry a beautiful woman in 1946 and he had three sons, I'm the youngest of the three.

We all come to this day of remembering with many and varied stories of how war and conflict have shaped our lives. It's hard to grasp how much they have influenced us, or to say the opposite, what our lives might have been had they not taken place. I don't generally share anything from my own family background, likely because it has been too painful. My oldest brother went to Vietnam and came back changed, in a negative way, likely due to what is now called PTSD. I could also speak of several addictions and negative habits my father and brother went on to experience or battle, but today is about remembering, so let us go forward, not backward.

We remember so we will not lose track of the cost of such wars and conflicts. We remember, in order to give thanks to God for what we have at

the cost of others. We remember that it is ultimately Jesus who paid the cost of forgiving our sins, and granting us relationship with God. He is the One whose blood gained our salvation. He is the centre of our remembering today.

Jesus was tested many times during his ministry, and in many ways. Dr. Luke tells us on this occasion that it was the Sadducees' turn to try and trick Jesus with a question or story. The Sadducees were members of a Jewish sect or party in the time of Jesus Christ that denied the resurrection of the dead, the existence of spirits, and the obligation of oral tradition, emphasizing acceptance of the written Law alone. So how do they try to trick Jesus with a question: What will happen in the Resurrection to these people...? It's almost humorous. They don't even believe in the resurrection, that is, that there is a life beyond this life, as real or even more so than this one. Do you believe in the life everlasting, as the Creed says? If you do, how does it affect your life now?

They say that a woman married a string of men who had health problems, or were accident prone, seven men, in fact. They all died early in their lives. This in itself might bring up several important questions, but the Sadducees decide on asking only one: Which husband will be hers at the resurrection?

Please note that Jesus doesn't belittle the Sadducees for asking such a question, nor point out the contradiction between their scenario and their faith position. He simply answers the question.

Jesus surprises us. Life is surprising. The physical parameters of this life won't necessarily hold true in the next. Apparently, Jesus' resurrection body could go through solid locked doors. Apparently, he could appear and disappear at will. So from Jesus' knowledge of what life will be like in the age to come: he notes that sexuality will not be the same. There will be no more marriage, no more sexual crimes, sexual urges or sin of any kind, as in this life. We will have new bodies, as 1 Corinthians 15: 35ff says. And those bodies will be as different as a seed is from the plant that comes from it. So you have something to look forward to, each one of you, who accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour. You are the ones worthy to take part in the age to come. It will be a different life, a different physics, in the holy city that goes 1500 miles into space (Rev. 21:16=12k *stadia*). It will be a great reunion, as it says in John 14.

And so we remember this life, giving thanks to God, but also looking forward to the new life we will have in God's presence, where His light replaces the street lights and the sun and the moon. A very different physics indeed. (Read Revelation 22 for more details.)

Then Jesus turns his attention back to the Scriptures that the Sadducees want to hear from, he talks about Exodus 3, and the account of Moses and the burning bush. He makes a point that God speaks aloud to Moses, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God Isaac and the God of Jacob." (v. 6) Then Jesus concludes from this passage a statement that should completely change our world view. Jesus says, "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive." This includes Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This includes humanity. Dr. Luke is clear on this point.

There is a life beyond this life, to which we all will go by bodily resurrection, some to be with the Lord, as they have chosen, and some apart from Him as they have chosen. We give the terms "heaven," that is life everlasting beyond this life and this physical existence in the very presence of God and "hell," that is, life beyond this life and physical existence apart from the very presence of God. I believe God gives those who do not want to be with Him their heart's desire, just as He gives those who do want to be with Him their heart's desire.

Take a moment and consider the tens of millions of war dead. They have gone to their graves, some very young. I'm not sure why Dad was spared or his father, but when I say "spared," it is a comment about living in this life. All, according to Jesus, go on to the next life and God rightly takes care of them.

So on this day of remembering, remember this life is not the last word on life. Jesus has that word. He is that Word. Remember that each of us gives an account of our lives directly to the Lord. He rightly judges us. We experience reunion and the new life and mission in that new life, as God directs. Our choices in this life matter. Choose today to give your life to Jesus Christ who gave His life for you. Don't hold back.

As we remember, we trust the Lord together. Bring your experience of war and conflict to the Lord, whether you have seen that firsthand, or only heard about it from previous generations. Whether it was your family that went into military service or not. Let God meet you where you have been,

whether in conflict, anger, great emotion, depression, in spiritual warfare or physical warfare...let God meet you anew in these areas, today.

Jesus was appreciated by the Sadducees at the end of Luke's account, in verse 39: "Well said, teacher!" Could it be that those who had not previously believed in the resurrection; now did receive Jesus' teaching on the resurrection? How about you? Have you considered your life with the Lord beyond this life? How does it affect you now?

And then in verse 40, it is noted that no one else asked Him any more questions. This is simply Dr. Luke's way of saying that Jesus passed the test and beyond when it came to answering questions, even the trick ones. Perhaps you have questions as a result of today's reflections. Bring them to Jesus, and He will answer. And if I can help, or any of the leaders here, we would be pleased to help.

Let us pray.